

Focused On What Matters Most

Victorian Budget 2025/26

The Hon Jacinta Allan MP

Premier of Victoria

Jaclyn Symes MP

Treasurer and Minister for Regional Development

Tuesday, 20 May 2025

REAL HELP WITH THE COST OF LIVING FOR REGIONAL VICTORIANS

The Allan Labor Government is focused on what matters most – delivering real help with the cost of living and even more investment in frontline services for regional communities.

Real help with the cost of living

Right now, cost of living is hurting families, here and around the world. Regional Victorians are not immune.

They're feeling it in their bills, and in their grocery shop. They're feeling it when they send the kids to school or visit a GP.

The Labor Government is on their side. And that's why this Budget delivers a record \$2.3 billion in real cost of living help.

That includes making public transport free for Victorians under the age of 18, saving regional families up to \$755 a year per child.

Free PT means cheaper school runs, more affordable weekends – and gives families one less thing to worry about.

This investment will make Victoria the first state to introduce free public transport for kids, with the change beginning 1 January 2026.

Seniors will also benefit from statewide public transport on weekends. It'll mean Victorians with a Seniors Card can experience even more of regional Victoria – without the extra expense.

This is one more way we can put money back into the pockets of Victorians – who've already saved more than \$132 million with our regional fare cap in its first two years.

We're also making it cheaper and easier for regional Victorians to access care.

This Budget invests a further \$18 million so Victorians can go to a pharmacist and get treated for with even more conditions for free without a trip to the doctor for a prescription.

Previously trialled as the Community Pharmacy Pilot, this investment locks it in for good – and makes it even bigger – helping regional and rural Victorians access advice and treatment close to home.

That means pharmacies across regional Victoria will be able to treat more conditions with medicines usually only available with a GP script – including allergies, nausea and high blood pressure, as well as minor wound care, with more conditions added progressively over the next two years.

We're covering the cost of the consult – ensuring Victorians can access care for free.

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This Budget helps those doing it hardest. That includes a Power Saving Bonus for eligible regional Victorian households with a concession card – delivering \$100 in time for winter bills in August.

It also invests \$30 million to support 27,000 homes install electric heat pumps and solar hot water systems, saving them up to \$400 on their energy bills every year.

A further \$12 million will fund the rollout of insulation upgrades under the Victorian Energy Upgrades Program, halving the average cost of ceiling insulation from \$3,000 to \$1,500.

Labor established the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund – helping young Victorians to get involved in the things that make school fun. This year, it's helping around 200,000 kids who have a parent or a carer with a health care or concession card.

Now, we're increasing payments – up from \$154 for primary school students and \$256 for secondary school students – to \$400 for every student, every year.

We're also delivering another 65,000 Get Active Kids vouchers, providing \$200 towards the cost of kids' sports membership, equipment or uniforms for families with a health care or concession card in every corner of the state.

And we're supporting food relief charities and organisations – doubling our support for the Regional Food Security Alliance.

This investment will deliver \$6 million for regional FoodShares in Albury-Wodonga, Geelong, Bendigo, Shepparton, Mildura and Warrnambool.

A further \$9 million will double our Community Food Relief Program, delivering grants to support frontline organisations, with a further \$3 million for Foodbank's GROW program, making sure surplus farm produce that would otherwise go to waste supports Victorians experiencing food insecurity.

This Budget also continues Free Kinder for three and four-year-olds, saving regional families up to \$2,600 per child per year on fees.

From the coastline to the countryside, we know Victorians love to get out into the great outdoors – and we're making it more affordable by investing \$10.5 million to keep camping fees at half price for another two years at Parks Victoria's 131 bookable campsites.

And we're making sure children under 16 can keep visiting Healesville Sanctuary and Kyabram Fauna Park for free on weekends, school holidays, and public holidays, with \$15.3 million invested in this Budget.

And because the best way to make housing more affordable is to build more homes – this Budget invests \$61 million to continue the stamp duty concession announced in October 2024, slashing the price for off-the-plan apartments, units and townhouses for another 12 months.

This builds on our historic \$5.3 billion Big Housing Build and \$1 billion Regional Housing Fund, which are delivering at least 13,300 social and affordable homes with thousands more regional Victorians already living in these modern, well-designed homes.

Investing in frontline services and staff

This Budget invests even more funding in frontline services – because they deliver the support Victorian families rely on, no matter where they live.

It means with this Budget, we're continuing to deliver the biggest investment in frontline staff and services as a share of workforce investment since 2019.

It's why this Budget includes an extra \$11.1 billion for health. This year alone, we are providing over \$31 billion to our health system.

The Labor Government is investing \$634 million to open and operate nine new or expanded hospitals – including the bigger and better Maryborough and District Hospital, a new community hospital in Phillip Island, plus the redeveloped emergency departments at Swan Hill District Health, Albury Wodonga Health and University Hospital in Geelong.

This Budget also invests \$437 million to expand the Victorian Virtual Emergency Department (VVED). The first of its kind in Australia, the VVED provides free expert care from emergency nurses and doctors – ensuring regional Victorians can get the urgent care they need, from the comfort of their own home.

The VVED currently delivers free care to more than 550 Victorians every day. Our investment will significantly increase its capacity – enabling the service to handle 1,750 calls per day by 2028, or more than 600,000 people every year.

We're focused on providing every Victorian with mental health support that works for them, no matter where they live. That's why this Budget invests \$23 million to expand our network of Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals with another seven locations, adding to the 15 existing Locals. A further \$6 million will support the existing network of Locals making sure they can reach even more Victorians with mental health help.

And we're installing 30 beds across our new regional Youth Prevention and Recovery Care centres in Geelong, Shepparton and Ballarat from July 2026 with an \$8 million investment.

This Budget also backs the vital work our paramedics do, with \$84.2 million to support 15 regional dual paramedic ambulance crews upgraded from single paramedic crews, four 24-hour ambulance branches upgraded from on-call after hours, and four rural Peak Period Units to bolster services during periods of high demand.

Investing in regional Victoria's road and rail

This Budget is delivering more train services across regional Victoria – because better transport means more time for what matters most.

An investment of \$52 million will deliver services every 40 minutes along the Traralgon line, new six car trains on weekend services on the Bendigo line and additional peak services for the Seymour line. This builds on the more than 2,000 additional weekly services added across the regional and metropolitan train network since 2015.

An extra \$270 million will continue improving and maintaining our V/Line network, ensuring a more reliable service for passengers. More CCTV cameras will also be installed at stations along the Geelong and Ballarat Lines, as well as at Bendigo Station, to keep communities and passengers safe.

This Budget also backs our Better Roads Blitz. \$976 million will be invested in 2025-26 alone to fix potholes and resurface roads, making it easier for Victorians to get where they're going.

And to futureproof our road network, we're investing \$50 million for important maintenance work on San Remo Bridge – the key link to Phillip Island, connecting residents and the 3.5 million tourists who visit the island each year.

We're cementing Victoria's reputation as Australia's freight and logistics capital, with more than \$120 million to support the sector including delivering vital maintenance across the rail freight network and our local ports, while also protecting land for future terminal upgrades – keeping Victorian farmers and manufacturers connected.

Investing in regional Victoria's kids

Every Victorian child deserves a great local school and a quality education no matter where they live.

This Budget delivers upgrades at 12 schools across regional Victoria – including:

- Belmont High School
- White Hills Primary School
- Broadford Primary School
- Colac West Primary School
- Edenhope College
- Lismore Primary School
- Stawell West Primary School
- Drouin Secondary College
- Lakes Entrance Primary School
- Leongatha Secondary College
- San Remo Primary School
- Wangaratta High School

But our commitment goes beyond bricks and mortar. That's why this Budget invests \$133 million to drive excellence in our classrooms – as well as \$15.2 million to attract more teachers to roles that are difficult to fill, including in rural and regional schools.

A targeted \$47 million investment will help increase kids' confidence with maths – upskilling existing maths teachers and delivering a new numeracy check for Year 1 students, helping identify students who need extra support early. Funding will also support new maths camps for Year 9s and 10s.

We're also investing \$1.8 million to help regional and rural students expand their careers and education pathways by accessing targeted support – because no matter where you grow up in Victoria, you deserve a bright future.

Students in Warrnambool will learn the STEM skills of tomorrow, thanks to \$9.2 million for local Tech Schools.

And because we'll always back our TAFE and training sector – this Budget includes \$11.1 million to upgrade facilities at The Gordon in Geelong, South West TAFE Hamilton campus, and Federation University TAFE in Ballarat and Mt Helen.

Keeping regional Victorians safe

The Labor Government is focused on keeping communities safe – introducing the toughest bail laws in the country.

With this Budget, we're backing in these bail changes – delivering \$727 million to bring almost 1,000 more prison beds online, attract, train and support new corrections officer staff, and strengthen our youth justice system.

A further \$13 million will support Australia's first machete ban, alongside new powers for Victoria Police to search for dangerous weapons.

While Victoria has one of the lowest rates of Aboriginal people in custody, we know connection to culture while incarcerated is crucial to rehabilitation.

This Budget invests almost \$22 million in a new grants program to support First Nations people on remand and on bail, with \$14 million to support Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service's regional hubs at Mildura, Bendigo, Morwell and Warrnambool and Koori Women's and Men's diversion programs in Gippsland and Mildura

This Budget backs our emergency services so they can continue to support us in times of need. That's why we're investing more than \$35 million to ensure our emergency services have the facilities they need, including delivering new CFA stations at Winnindoo and Hoddles Creek, as well as a new satellite station for Wendouree.

We're investing \$40 million in a rolling fleet replacement program for Fire Rescue Victoria – ensuring that firefighters across Victoria for heavy pumpers and ladder platforms to keep doing what they do best.

We're also protecting regional Victorians from future natural disasters by investing \$23.5 million so Forest Fire Management Victoria can complete planned burns and other critical fuel management to lower bushfire risk.

Investing in our regional communities and environment

We need to preserve and protect Victoria's natural environment for future generations.

This Budget invests \$21.1 million to protect our unique parks, beaches, bush and coastline, including support for our critical Landcare and Coastcare programs.

Water is more than a resource – it means security and jobs for thousands of Victorians.

The Budget invests \$32.6 million to ensure the health of creeks and rivers across Victoria including in the Murray Darling Basin.

Regional workers are the backbone of our agricultural sector, which generates \$20 billion for our economy every year. To ensure this sector continues to grow, this Budget invests \$35.6 million to protect our produce and livestock including helping primary producers prepare for the changes to our climate.

This Budget also invests \$16.6 million for extra resourcing and equipment to make sure Agriculture Victoria is ready to respond to future emergencies and to back our animal welfare organisations.

Tourism in regional Victoria injects billions of dollars into our economy every year – backing local businesses, jobs and helping communities flourish.

We're continuing to back our regional tourism sector with \$11 million to ensure our Visitor Economy Partnerships can continue to help grow regional tourism, boost regional jobs and advocate for local tourism priorities. A further \$11 million will see the Nyaal Banyul Geelong Convention and Event Centre open its doors next year and bring thousands of visitors to this regional hub.

This Budget also invests \$6 million to support tourism at iconic spots along the Great Ocean Road like the new Twelve Apostles Experience Centre – supporting local economies and local jobs.

This is a Budget – and a Labor Government – focused on what matters most to regional Victorians.

Quotes attributable to Premier Jacinta Allan

“This Budget is focused on what matters most – delivering real help with the cost of living, backing frontline services and staff, and ensuring that every dollar makes a real difference to families in regional Victoria.”

“From free PT for kids to support for those doing it hardest – this is a Budget that delivers real help when it matters most.”

“I know the real difference our frontline services make to regional communities – that’s why we’re investing more in our regional hospitals, schools, road and rail.”

Quote attributable to Treasurer and Minister for Regional Development Jaclyn Symes

“This Budget is focused on helping families in every corner of our state – ensuring regional Victorians can better access the healthcare, education and regional services and infrastructure they need.”